

SVI Bi-Monthly Seminar October 2016: Report

Emerging Security Paradigm and Deterrence Equilibrium in South Asia



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Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) organized a bi-monthly seminar on the topic titled “Emerging Security Paradigm and Deterrence Equilibrium in South Asia” held on October 20, 2016 at the Islamabad Club. The one day bi-monthly seminar started off with the recitation of the Holy Quran. In the inaugural session, the President/Executive Director SVI,



Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema, welcomed and thanked the honorable Chief Guest, Lt. Gen. (R) Syed Muhammad Owais (Secretary, Ministry of Defense Production, Rawalpindi), distinguished chairs and speakers and worthy participants for affording valuable time out of their busy schedule and gracing

the occasion with their presence. The conference was well attended by the members of academia, diplomats, policy-making civil and military establishments and students in the field of strategic and nuclear studies, and international politics from prominent universities in Islamabad. Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema presented a detailed overview of the seminar topic that focused on South Asia, primarily India and Pakistan being the two principal states of this region. He said the current tensions between India and Pakistan can be easily traced back to the election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government and now accentuated after the Uri episode; an attack by the militants on the Indian military forces. The issue has become more complicated but knowing Prime Minister Modi and the kind of composition of his government, this kind of situation or deterioration between India and Pakistan could not have been ruled out. It has been in fact the part of fluctuations that have taken place between India and Pakistan since independence. The South Asian history is interspersed with wars, conflict, crisis and disruption of diplomatic relations and dialogues between the two states, therefore the prevailing tension was quite expected. He stated that it is not a cozy situation. There is a kind of conflict growing up which if escalates, either intentionally or inadvertently, will make the situation all the more dangerous, since both India and Pakistan are nuclear weapon states. He suggested that it needs to be addressed and handled with utmost care. Not just for the sake of peace and stability of both countries but also because the ramification might go beyond the South Asian region. Further elaborating

on the issue he said that the International community is concerned about the current tension between the two South Asian nuclear states. The current dynamics of this tension are very well known, the core problem is Kashmir issue. The young Kashmiri generation has risen up against the decades of occupation, suppression and atrocities. However the Indian public, notwithstanding media and Indian government, is not as bad as it has been previously. There is sympathy in some echelons of the general public. For instance there was a protest in the Jawaharlal Nehru University against the violation of fundamental human rights. Simultaneously some other reports by Indian media also have written and spoken against the way India is suppressing Kashmiri movement. However, the response of Modi's government is worse than the traditional Indian response.

Regarding the Uri event, Dr. Cheema said, India has internationalized this event. He highlighted two Indian objectives, first, to malign Pakistan in the world alleging that terrorist attack at Uri was done by Pakistan. Second, India is now trying to make a political capital of local situation and trying to project Pakistan as terrorist state which he said is also a general objective of Modi's government. He mentioned that India tried its best to isolate Pakistan and wanted it to be declared a terrorist state at BRICS Summit but failed miserably. He appreciated that China stood with Pakistan and rejected Indian claims. He declared China's stance correct as Pakistan remains the worst victim of terrorism despite playing a vital role in suppressing terrorism. The Indian government is receiving serious criticism by its own press over its performance at BRICS Summit. These kind of trends are putting pressure on the existing security paradigm of South Asia.

Lt. Gen. (R) Syed Muhammad Owais in his chief guest address said that South Asia is a volatile region that is increasingly facing escalatory trends in the conflict between two old rivals India and Pakistan. These escalatory trends present a dangerous situation that has the potential to spiral into a limited conventional conflict



or may even inadvertently lead to a nuclear catastrophe. On the prevailing tension, he said that the recent tensions between the two nuclear powers and those in the past signify the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir. Indian brutalities in occupied Kashmir are a matter of great concern for Pakistan. Uri attack and subsequent Indian aggression on the line of control once again brought the question of deterrence equilibrium into discussions. He elaborated that India's partnership with the US, Russia, Israel and Europe is a result of their own political, economic and strategic interests. There is a history of US tilt towards India. The US has been supportive of Indian positions on international issues like Indian quest for the membership of the Nuclear Supplier Group, and Indian bid for the UN Security Council membership.

Regarding bilateral issues between India and Pakistan, he stated, US has turned a blind eye on Indian human rights violations in Kashmir. It is not willing to contribute towards the resolution of this core issue between the nuclear neighbors, instead is asking both countries to resolve it bilaterally. Realistically speaking, Washington wants to bring India on par with China. However its partnership with India is certainly a matter of concern for Pakistan more than it is for China. Washington at the same time cannot afford to completely detach itself from Pakistan, for several reasons.

On Russia's role he said that India has successfully maintained a balance in its relationship with Russia and the US. Russia despite its location far away from South Asia is a major player in this region. Its policies have been influential to the deterrence equilibrium in South Asia. India is the largest purchaser of Russian weapons and both countries have launched joint defense ventures in the field of missiles (BrahMos missile), helicopters, submarines, aircraft carriers, and nuclear reactors.

Lt. Gen (R) Owais appreciated that without a doubt Pakistan's nuclear weapons have maintained deterrence against India. Both the countries know that any misadventure would lead to Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). Conventionally, Pakistan is still behind India; however, nuclear weapons have covered that gap to some extent. Pakistan has kept its nuclear doctrine ambiguous so that the element of surprise could be utilized. India introduced Cold-Start Doctrine in order to launch limited war against Pakistan for

achieving certain specific objectives. Pakistan in response developed Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs), battlefield nuclear weapons for countering such specific strikes from the Indian side. Both Pakistan and India have not signed NPT and there seems less possibility for regional cooperation in the nuclear field.

He further shed light on the current Indian policy and said that the present Indian government of Mr. Modi has sensitized regional security paradigm. Regionally, agenda of Modi's government reflects objectives like isolation of Pakistan and instability inside Pakistan. These efforts were seen at the recent BRICS Summit. He further added that India has effectively engaged Bangladesh, Afghanistan and to some extent Iran and Saudi Arabia also to isolate Pakistan. India's increasing involvement in Afghanistan poses direct security threats for Pakistan as this renders both eastern and western borders insecure.

However, he concluded by saying that India's efforts to destabilize and isolate Pakistan are now proving fruitless. International community is confident about Pakistan's significance for the region and for the world at large. Ground realities show that Pakistan has shifted its priorities from West to East. China is already a close friend, while Russia is also warming up its relations with Pakistan; wherein both the countries conducted joint military exercises recently. CPEC project between Pakistan and China is now a reality and a source of regional economic integration. Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan have shown interest in becoming part of the CPEC project. Conversely, regional cooperation at SAARC level has become illusive; the organization is losing its potential owing to Indian hegemonic policies and inflexible behavior. And last but not the least, the sooner India realizes Pakistan's potential as a partner, the better would be for the regional peace and prosperity.



Dr. Mujeeb Afzal (Assistant Professor, Department of IR, QAU) presented his views on “Critical Geopolitics: Emerging Security Dynamics in South Asia and Beyond”. He started his speech by talking about the critical theory, geography and vision about South Asia and their impact on the South Asian politics. Dr. Mujeeb

said critical theory is a mutually inclusive linkage between knowledge and power and they both serve each other. Objective reality essentially is a perspective that is based on the power discourse and it serves a particular Western interest. He added that critical geography in the same line rejects the assertion of geo-classical politician that geography is objective, given or natural. People and state are victims of dictates and geography. He suggested to rather de-neutralize geography and to instead consider people and states as a source of geographical power discourse. A state with the help of its subordinate large group of intellectuals intentionally collects knowledge in its interaction with its geo-positioning and material sources. It constructs a discourse and institutionalizes this discourse through centralized bureaucracy and makes the space meaningful. It provides people a special identity, a territorial space, in which they are living. The identity is a social construct dividing people between 'us' and 'they'. He elaborated that through this identity they evolve a vision of 'self', how they view self and through this self they view the others. These vision works as a tool of state craft through which the state policies are constructed. Thus the discourse of us and they defines the territorial space and explains policies/actions of the state. He highlighted that the third world states are a by-product of their colonial experiences, structures and discourse. South Asia went through colonial experience of British Raj. Its communal discourse was institutionalized through centralized bureaucracy of the Raj and new construct emerged as religion (Hindu-Muslim) that converted into India and Pakistan. There exist tensions between space (South Asia), territory (nation state) and place (ethnicity and sectarianism). This tension exists in every colonial state.

Dr Mujeeb explained that Delhi views South Asia as one unit of security and does not define its security as nation state rather as a region. India divides the space, territory and the globe in three different manners and follows policies exactly on the same basis. It introduced composite culture, secularism and democracy. But this vision of India was contested by the Hindu nationalists from its beginning. They essentially claimed that Hinduism is composite, secular and democratic. At regional level India specifically asserted coercive view of regional security, as the by-product of this policy was found in 1971 (partition of Pakistan), nuclearization of India and an established regional colonization on the basis of economy, culture and security.

At the international level, especially during the Cold War, India followed a moralist approach, non-violence and non-alignment. However it needed capital and technology to construct itself as great power. In addition it also faced Pakistan's Western alliance thus it started to develop relations with Soviet Union. In post cold war era, Soviet Union was replaced with the United States. India was needed in the South China Sea at the tree levels of countries, first Japan and Australia, second Singapore and Indonesia and third Vietnam. Thus India found it convenient to be there as a promise of security partner along with United States.

Dr. Mujeeb opined that India failed to keep South Asia free from outside powers. Pakistan was little more successful as compared to other South Asian states but it paid the price in 1971. Now it is time to come close to China but if there emerges any serious clash between US and China then Pakistan can face limited isolation and less technology.

He concluded by saying that South Asia's institutionalization of identity at regional level is very weak. It has very little economic interdependence that can emerge into a region. SAARC is a victim of power-play. Pakistan is suffering from its obsession with security and is going through the problems of terrorism/ethnicity, weak political and civil administrative systems and extreme external dependency both at perceptual and structural level. India, interestingly, now follows the Pakistani example; they started communal discourse exactly like us that created internal instability between cast and community. As far as the external entanglement is concerned, India will be welcomed against China because India is a soft state so the more it goes to the US it will invite Chinese reaction into its domestic politics. The significant point is that unlike other South Asian states, India is the biggest state of region and if India is destabilized that would lead to the destabilization of entire state system of South Asia. Thus Modi is playing a serious and risky game, both at domestic level by undermining the composite culture, secularism and democracy and at external level aligned with United States in search of capital and technology.

Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema deliberated on the "Changing Nature of Deterrence Equilibrium and Strategic Stability in South Asia". He reiterated that Pakistan's joining of SEATO and CENTO has been declared as a controversial decision but it enabled Pakistan

to acquire a conventional military capability by the end of 1950s and early 60s. Pakistan acquired conventional equilibrium with India. The American aid and the acquisition of military equipments drove Pakistan away from the nightmares of Indian threats. Pakistan was no more receiving threats from India after



SEATO and CENTO. He said 1971 was major debacle for Pakistan, which reduced its size and resources to maintain security equilibrium vis-à-vis India. The security paradigm in post 1970s remained in India's favor until 1998 nuclear test.

He maintained that 1998 test by India was an opportunity for Pakistan to re-establish security equilibrium with India by compensating conventional asymmetry with nuclear weapon capability. In post nuclear test era, India no doubt remained the most powerful country in South Asia but Pakistan is also a significant conventional military power and nuclear weapon state. He said there are micro factors which continue to inject variables in this security paradigm, those micro factors are: relationship between India and Pakistan at political and diplomatic level, acquisition of arms by India and Pakistan, nuclear weapons development by both states and the situation in Kashmir. He further added that other factors that affect the security paradigm in South Asia are the extra regional powers, the role that the three powers, US, China and Russia play in this region. The US role has always been fluctuating in history; it was indifferent towards South Asian security before the USSR intervention in Afghanistan. US used Pakistan in the war against Soviet Union by rebranding the concept of Jihad. He stated, Pakistan has paid a very heavy price which still requires an academic study and policy review of cost and benefit analysis of Pakistan's role in 80s fight against the Soviets. He said that history cannot be undone but we should learn lessons for the future.

On the deterrence equilibrium, Dr. Cheema said, it has played an important role in Pakistan's national security and in averting wars between the two arch rivals of South Asia. The combination of military and weapons capability enabled Pakistan to defuse the situation in favor of Pakistan where India could no longer impose a war upon Pakistan after 1998. He further said that the most important factor that will determine the deterrence equilibrium in South Asia is the induction of new nuclear weapon system in South Asia which includes INS Arihant, submarine launched ballistic missiles and acquisition of ballistic missile defense. Pakistan is not unaware of the potential of such kind of deployments and Pakistan is also not unaware of the kind of strategic weapon system based on nuclear warheads which India is developing while Pakistan is not lagging behind in maintaining its national security based on adequate national defense and nuclear weapons capability. Pakistan's maintenance and advancement of minimum credible deterrence at the moment is well recognized internationally which discourages India to launch a war against Pakistan. After having the full spectrum deterrence, Pakistan now has the capability to cover all kinds of threats. Dr. Cheema cautioned that India has very aggressive strategic posture; it is aiming at the nuclearization of Indian Ocean and projecting military power in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. Both these water bodies have traditionally been recognized as very important waters for Pakistan's national security and should remain a concern for Pakistani military decision makers. On the second strike capability and maritime security of Pakistan, Dr. Cheema stressed that second strike nuclear capability would be a more credible increment in Pakistan's maintenance of minimum credible deterrence and full spectrum deterrence.



Brig. Zahir ul Haider Kazmi (Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Affairs, SPD) spoke about “Nuclear Crisis, Dangerous Threshold and Escalation Control in South Asia: Implications for the Region”. He explained the four loaded terms in the title – nuclear crisis, dangerous thresholds and

escalation control and South Asia. On the nuclear crisis he said that since the advent of nuclear weapons seven decades ago, the world has witnessed few crises that could be classically labeled as 'nuclear.' According to him the Cuban Missile Crisis between the former Soviet Union and the U.S. that lasted for thirteen days in October 1962 was a classic nuclear crisis. If that crisis was not deescalated, there was a likelihood that it could result in a nuclear exchange. He questioned whether we should call the crises between India and Pakistan as nuclear crises. In past, both India and Pakistan have always recognized that nuclear weapons are a factor of stability between them. However, he maintained that the crises in the past have not escalated to wars due to nuclear factor – but no one can guarantee that this pattern will hold in future. This is because the deterrence relationship remains under stress owing to some recent doctrinal and force posture related developments. While speaking on dangerous thresholds, Brig. Kazmi said, both India and Pakistan maintain opacity about their thresholds for the obvious reason that once you set a bar, the adversary will play below it. Since the thresholds are ambiguous, no one can guess at what point a crisis shift gears to a conventional or nuclear war. However he recalled that in 2003-04, India tried the idea of fighting a limited conventional war under nuclear overhang. It has almost operationalized the so-called Cold Start Doctrine in last twelve years and quixotically hopes that it would not lead to conventional or nuclear war because New Delhi's bluster of a massive nuclear retaliation will credibly deter a limited use.

On escalation control, Brig. Kazmi elaborated that since the probability of minor conflicts and crises shall exist between India and Pakistan, in a crisis cycle, neither of them would be able to guarantee controlling or dominating crisis escalation – especially once a side starts a war thinking it will remain conventional domain at tactical or operational level. The dominant thought in deterrence debate is that no nuclear power would be able to control the pace of escalation by threatening another with massive retaliation – and also hoping that it would deter a response.

On the implications of repeated crises in the Subcontinent and the risk that nuclear threshold may be crossed, Brig. Kazmi made six broad propositions; first, Pak-Indo Subcontinent has the potential to ultimately rise as the economic powerhouse in South Asia

if both States could stabilize their relations at the strategic level and overcome their sources of conflict. Second, enduring political stability between India and Pakistan would lie in de-freezing the status quo instead of holding each other to ransom with conventional and nuclear weapons, albeit growing imbalances. Third, in the military domain, both powers should strive to maintain a stable nuclear deterrence through several mutually inclusive measures, such as eschewing any dangerous conventional or nuclear doctrines e.g. shunning the doctrines that seek the space to fight under nuclear threshold and the threat of massive retaliation. Fourth, the temptation of inadvertently equating the legitimate freedom struggle in Jammu & Kashmir with terrorism should be resisted. Fifth, for achieving stability, peacetime relations should be defined by meaningful engagement through strategic restraint and confidence building. Sixth and last proposition was about deterrence instability: for normalization at the political level and avoiding a nuclear conflict i.e. nuclear deterrence would be the next ideal. This means that the probability of minor conflicts and crises shall exist.

He concluded by saying that the deterrence stability is coming under a growing degree of stress due to certain factors such as: a) India's force posture developments – like nuclearization of Indian Ocean, spike in fissile material stocks and development of BMD shield; and b) its doctrinal developments.

The talks by the speakers were followed by an interactive question and answer session:

A student from COMSATS asked about the cyber threats to Pakistan's nuclear facility and if there is any doctrine to deal with India's advancement in this field? Brig, Kazmi mentioned about a news report regarding India having the cyber army. This shows that a lot of work is being done regarding cyber warfare. Recently some laws have also been introduced and Pakistan is equally aware of these threats. Pakistan will take all the defensive measures that are required not only to safeguard strategic nuclear program but other sectors too.

Mr. Zulfiqar Ali from CPGS asked how effective is Pakistan's second strike capability and if the cold start doctrine of India still effective today? Dr. Cheema replied that both

countries do have a kind of second strike capability and both are in the process of improving that. The ship based second strike capability is not that reliable and Pakistan is still some years away from introducing a submarine. On the CSD he said, viewing the Indian aggressive posture Pakistan should believe that it is operational.

Mr. Pervez Butt, former Chairman IAEA, commented that we talked about nuclear deterrence but now we should talk about economic deterrence as the next war against Pakistan would be in the economic domain which could be really challenging as Pakistan is not economically as strong as its neighbor.

Mr. Sham uz Zaman asked about the development of INS Arihant and the possibility of India operationlizing its naval based nuclear capability. He asked if in that case would India be exercising its nuclear doctrine of centralized command and control system or there would be a mechanism where it would still be exercising positive control on its nuclear doctrine? Dr. Cheema opined that it would remain a centralized control but no nuclear state has ever ignored the fact that there could be contingencies in which there has to be delegations, both goes simultaneously.

Ms. Saima Aman, Research Fellow CISS, asked whether pre-delegation would happen in terms of adhoc nuclear capabilities at sea and what would be the implications of that in terms of crisis and escalation. Brig. Kazmi said if two adversaries have submarine based strike capabilities it is assuring deterrence because both knows that there is a degree of uncertainty.

Mr. Zafar Ali commented that in today's world of globalization, economic interdependence, nuclear deterrence equilibrium, traditional notions of borders have somehow faded away, how then we specifically come to define South Asia in relation to deterrence and equilibrium? Dr. Cheema agreed with the basic premise of the question. He explained that the consideration of deterrence equilibrium is not complete in South Asian context unless the role of three major extra regional powers is also taken account. The policies of the United States and the way it mediates between India and Pakistan during conflict and crisis situation, the role China plays in defusing these kinds of potential

conflicts, moreover Russia at the moment is playing a more balanced if not neutral role between India and Pakistan in defusing these kinds of situations in which deterrence can be equated. Dr. Cheema said the geographical borders are wider frontiers in which the extra-regional states play a very important role.

Mr. Mustansar Klasra, DSS QAU, asked that Russia has recently conducted military exercises with Pakistan and at the same time it is selling weapons to India so how should we take the policies of Russia? Dr. Cheema replied that Russia is interested in billions of dollar from India and they are interested in normalization of relations with Pakistan.

Ms. Mehwish, student of MS IR from COMSAT asked if nuclear weapons are considered a significant factor for maintaining stability in the relations between the two states then why has the purpose not been achieved yet? Brig. Kazmi replied if one is able to achieve strategic stability then there is probably no need to have deterrence stability. So it is the absence of strategic stability which demands to maintain the deterrence stability. Whenever the nuclear factor came into play it did not allow the situation to escalate into a full-fledged war. However there is a space for limited war only which keeps putting deterrence stability a bit under stress.

Mr. Ross Masood Husain, Chairperson SVI in his concluding remarks talked about the way forward. He said Pakistan armed forces are completely aware of the aggressive posture by India. There is a need to strengthen our armed force, remain vigilant and to keep the guns oiled and powder dry. He endorsed the views



discussed earlier in seminar about economic deterrence and said that we also need to work on the diplomatic deterrence as one of the major objectives of India is to isolate Pakistan. He concluded by passing three major messages to the international community; 1) we need to convince international community that Kashmir continues to be a nuclear threshold and

such a flashpoint flare-up can bring disaster and nuclear escalation. Secondly, we also need to convey the world that seventy years have passed and despite our best efforts to solve the Kashmir issue it is still unresolved. Consequently, the international community must take an intensive effort to bring the two parties together and to put all the pressure necessary to bring the peaceful settlement of Kashmir dispute. Third, we need to understand that now the field of conflict is economics and diplomacy. Mr. Ross said these two are the matters that we have to deal with and he suggested SVI to hold seminar on economic and diplomatic deterrence in future.

Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema concluded the discussion by profoundly thanking the august audience and mentioned that their presence made this seminar a successful endeavor. He offered special thanks to the guest speakers and expressed his appreciation to all the guests for actively participating and making the discussion interactive. He also extended his gratitude to the research and secretarial staff of the SVI for their hard work.